COPY

2370 Marin Avenue
Berkeley, California
August 26, 1941

Mr. Howard Martin
Chairman Community Council
Novato, California

Dear Mr. Martin:

Am writing, as I promised to do, about the inception and development of the Community House work in Novato. I was called to the Novato Church as Pastoral Supply in the summer of 1915. We found at that time a church membership of 25 and no Sunday School. There was a one room Church building and no Manse. There was not sufficient financial backing to support a Pastor, but with generous help from the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions the work was started.

At first the Pastorate was for the Novato Church together with the Church at Cortr Madera. A student from the Seminary was also furnished by the Board as Assistant Pastor. He and I alternated in the preaching so that both pulpits were supplied each Sunday.

Besides pulpit services and S. S. work our first constructive effort was to build a Manse. With some donated labor the present Manse was built on the Church lot at a cost of about $1600.00, part of which was given by the Board of Church Erection. The Pastor moved in from his rented house in the fall of 1915.

After a couple of years it was decided that the Pastor of the two churches should give all his time to Novato. The growth of the Church was slow but constant. The S. S. was developed to over 100 and the church membership to about the same number.

The Country Life Dept. of our Board of Home Missions, with Dr. Warren H. Wilson as Director, agreed to sponsor the Novato work and it was named a Demonstration Parish. Studying the needs of the Parish we had to take into consideration a township population of about 2000. Of these, one half were foreign born or children of foreign born parents, mostly from Catholic countries. Novato had a Catholic church to minister to the spiritual need of their people, but the rest of the population, representing several nationalities and numerous religious denominations, were lacking in the unity necessary to progress. It seemed to the Pastor that if all of these racial, political, and religious elements could be brought together for better understanding, on the common ground of citizenship, education and material improvement, it would be a step toward a better ordered life. This led to the idea of a Community House, a place where all could assemble with no debate, with no clash of conflicting ideas, but for cultivating fellowship, and for unity of action in such projects as would be for the general good.

Following the close of the war, in 1918, the state of California was sponsoring community organization. A mass meeting was called under these auspices in what is now the Druids Hall. There an organization was effected on the basis proposed by the state. The Presbyterian Pastor was elected Chairman. A governing council of twelve was chosen and a constitution adopted. The Charter given us by the state is still framed in the Community building.

There was a strongly felt need for a building in which to carry on our activities. A lot and building on the corner of Grant and Sherman Avenues was for sale. The Post Office had been there for many years, in connection with a store and warehouse. The property was purchased for $700.00. Mr. A. M. Newhall of San Rafael, a friend of the Church, loaned us the money. Chairs were bought and motion picture equipment. Shows were given once a week. The proceeds from these, and other rentals of the property, were used for maintenance and to pay off indebtedness. The experience gained in various uses of this property, which included Red Cross work, Agricultural demonstrations, and a variety of social and civic affairs, convinced the Council that we could use to good advantage, a much larger and better equipped place. Land was found available on the same block back of the Church, and bought for $1500.00. Plans for a building, to fit the needs discovered in the use of the old building on Grant Avenue, were made.

How to finance such a building in a community where there were no wealthy people was a serious problem. By making the property an adjunct of the church work we could get generour assistance from the denomination and from friends of the church in other places.

It was not the desire of the Pastor or of any Church authorities to limit the use of the building in any way except to keep it within the bounds of law and decency. They were quite willing, and indeed anxious that the entire community should elect the growing body. But financially it was made a church project in order that we might have the large outside assistance that was necessary; and for the additional reason that the property would thus be removed from any possible conflicts that might develop in the Community. Those who know the history of community houses have observed that local quarrels are the rock on which many such projects have ceased to be useful and have gone to pieces. So it was deemed wise to make the Trustees of the Presbytery of the Redwoods the holding Corporation. This would conform with the laws governing the use of Church funds, would protect those who invested their money, and would protect the local people by guaranteeing the permanence and stability of the project.

Occasionally some one rises to question the holding of community property by the Church. But the above considerations have been repeatedly explained since the beginning of the movement. After thinking of the matter thru the years, and watching developments, I still see no reason to question the wisdom of the disposition made of the property when the project was started. On any other plan the property could not have been acquired. The governing body is still elected by all the inhabitants of the township who desire to have part in the choice; and no one is asked to pay one cent on the property except for maintenance.

When the building was proposed we could not ask outside help until the local people had shown their desire and interest by subscribing to the fund. I am enclosing for you, as Chairman of the Council, a copy of the original and only subscription list. I do not think it should be published but it is well to have it on hand for the private inspection of any one who wishes to know exactly where the money came from. The original cost of the building was about $20,000.00.

The support given by the whole community, Catholic and Protestant and people of many nationalities, has been extremely gratifying. Every citizen has a right to be proud of such a civic and recreational center; not only that they have such a beautiful and so useful a building, but proud too of the way it has been built and paid for. Every dollar owed has been paid, and was paid when it was due. When we did not have money to meet an obligation we borrowed it. We worked together and worked hard, and maintained both our credit and out self respect. In all the years as a member of the Council I remember only the best of feeling and of cooperation.

This surely goes to prove that people may differ in religious and political opinions and yet work together with great satisfaction for cultural growth and for mutual helpfulness.

(signed) Charles Christensen

# Subscription List - Novato Community House 1923

| Name | Sub. | Pd. | Name | Sub. | Pd. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R. H. Trumbull | $500 | $500. | A. R. Paxton | $ 75 | $ 75. |
| Jas. Gage | 500 | 500 | T. Kaufhold | 25 | 25 |
| Utilities Co. | 500 | 500 | R. G. Shoults | 125 | 60 |
| A. B. Keller | 500 | 375 | F. Anderson | 50 | 50 |
| Edith Trumbull | 150 | 150 | M. Gounod | 50 | 50 |
| Dr. Ritter | 250 | 130 | Fr. Battisti | 10 | 10 |
| C. E. Carlile | 250 | 250 | Iva Doss | 50 | 10 |
| R. S. Brown | 250 | 250 | H. Nobman | 5 | 5 |
| Mrs. Q. J. Boone | 250 | 250 | Wm. Millmeister | 25 | 25 |
| Aid Society | 250 | 250 | A. H. Mills | 50 | 50 |
| Sunday School | 250 | 250 | A. W. Bean | 25 | 3 |
| C. Christensen | 250 | 250 | E. Nisson | 25 | 25 |
| H. Zeh | 250 | 60 | Geo. Winn | 25 | 25 |
| J. P. Geary | 125 | 125 | W. E. Rogers | 25 | 3 |
| J. G. Guth | 125 | 25 | Masonic Club | 125 | 125 |
| W. L. Bojorques | 125 | 75 | Fred Stubbe | 10 | 10 |
| G. D. Morrison | 125 | 125 | Frank Groscup | 50 | 50 |
| W. H. Busher | 125 | 125 | R. H. Evers | 50 | 50 |
| A. D. White | 125 | 125 | P. W. Binford | 25 | 15 |
| Wm. Koch | 125 | 125 | A. W. Anderson | 25 | 25 |
| J. H. Scott | 125 | 125 | E. Tracey | 25 | 26 |
| A. D. Scott | 125 | 125 | P. W. Cantwell | 25 | 9 |
| W. T. Dettner | 125 | 125 | J. C. Anderson | 25 | 25 |
| H. Pini | 125 | 125 | D. D. Pittman | 50 | 50 |
| C. E. Society | 125 | 125 | C. Zimmerman | 62.50 | 22.50 |
| C. N. Tharsing | 125 | 10 | G. L. Owens | 50. | 50. |
| P. Peterson | 125. | 40 | J. McDermott | 50. | 50 |
| A. DeBorba Jr. | 125. | 50 | J. Nimmins | 50. | 50 |
| A. Balz | 125. | 45 | J. D. Bursell | 250. | 250. |
| F. C. Butler | 125. | 125. | J. DeBorba | 50 | 50 |
| C. Hansen | 125 | 125 | H. Rudolff | 200. | 200 |
| D. W. Phillips | 125 | 44.50 | J. Seaman | 50. | 50 |
| W. E. Cole | 125 | 125. | M. D. Smith | 25. | 25 |
| G. E. Gage | 100 | 40 | E. K. Strong | 50. | 50 |
| P. Magetti | 100 | 100 | F. Sweetzer | 60 | 60 |
| J. A. Stutt | 75 | 75 | Lulu Sutton | 50 | 50 |
| Ladies Masonic C. | 75 | 75 | Gertrude Lane | 50 | 50 |
| J. J. Merryman | 75 | 75 | G. G. Vickerson | 50 | 50 |
| R. Knutte | 75 | 63 | W. E. Porcella | 50 | 50 |
| Geo. Olliver | 75 | 21 | H. Stone | 25 | 25 |
| F. Palloni | 75 | 25 | Wm. Gauthier | 25 | 19 |
| D. Beguhl | 50 | 38 | T. F. Sutton | 25 | 25 |
| R. H. Trumbull, Jr. | 50 | 50 | M. Cain | 25 | 25 |
| Helen Trumbull | 50 | 50 | G. C. Woodburn | 50 | 50 |
| Mr. DeLaRosa | 50 | 28 | J. Edsburg | 50 | 42 |
| Rosa Ish | 50 | 22 | Mr. Nurnberger | 25 | 22 |
| D. Freeland | 50 | 50 | M. L. Riegel | 5 | 5 |
| E. J. Frisbie | 50 | 50 | D. J. Ryan | 5 | 5 |
| C. W. Cameron | 50 | 50 | L. Guerra | 5 | 5 |
| Mrs. S. H. Nielsen | 50 | 50 | E. Schremli | 5 | 5 |
| Mrs. Fagerberg | 50 | 48 | J. E. Lindsey | 25 | 16 |
| J. W. Dunlap | 50 | 50 | R. E. McDonald | 25 | 25 |
| E. R. McDonald | 50 | 40 | A. H. Anderson | 125 | 105 |
| J. E. Carlson | 50 | 50 | L. Rodini | 25 | 5 |
| F. Boileau | 50 | 50 | E. L. Ely | 25 | 25 |
| Chloe Campbell | 50 | 50 | H. H. D. Hart | 125 | 30 |
| C. Clarkson | 50 | 50 | P. Renati | 25 | 25 |
| C. Olson | 50 | 4 | F. L. Tainter | 25 | 25 |
| John Swanson | 50 | 50 | G. Trabucchi | 25 | 25 |
| C. H. McIntosh | 50 | 50 | V. C. Clark | 25 | 25 |
| C. Gerhardt | 50 | 50 | C. Gustafson | 50 | 50 |
| L. Huer | 50 | 50 | F. E. Sawyer | 50 | 50 |
| W. K. Alexander | 50 | 2 | P. LaFranchi | 25 | 25 |
| W. K. Burkman | 50 | 50 | F. W. Miller | 25 | 25 |
| F. J. Zimmerman | 25 | 25 | J. R. Thompson | 50 | 50 |
| O. W. Hall | 10 | 10 | R. L. Kokjer | 50 | 50 |

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| Name | Sub. | Pd. | Name | Sub. | Pd. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| F. Pierra | $ 25. | $ 15. | Mr. Teachout | $ 75. | 25. |
| Novato Elks | 75. | 75. | Frank Gnoss | 25. | 25. |
| A. DeNeff | 75. | 25. | H. E. Enyeart | 50. | 30. |
| G. V. Noel | 25. | 25. | S. Efferi | 25. | 20. |

Grand Total $10,003.00

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